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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10 YEARS  
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SUBJECT: NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL MAKING A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

Classified By: DCM Michael Butler for reasons 1.4(b) & (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: On April 20, 2006, the Salvadoran Legislature elected Felix Garrid Safie as Attorney General of the Republic (FGR). Safie was nominated after his predecessor, Belasario Artiga, failed to garner enough support for his reelection bid. With only two months on the job, Safie has already undertaken several important initiatives, such as prosecuting high-profile money laundering and trafficking in persons cases. Most importantly, Safie has recommitted the FGR to working closely with the PNC to achieve successful prosecutions. End Summary.

12. (U) On April 20, 2006, the Salvadoran Legislature elected Felix Garrid Safie as Attorney General of the Republic (FGR). Safie, an ARENA party operative, had been serving as the Director of the National Registration Center (Centro Nacional de Registro) since 1999. Safie worked in the private sector as an attorney and business consultant prior to his appointment to the CNR.

13. (C) Safie was nominated after his predecessor, Belasario Artiga, failed to garner enough support for his reelection bid. Although the Embassy was silent on the issue of Artiga's election, it was widely known in the GOES and the Legislature that Post law enforcement agencies were not pleased with Artiga's performance. Despite ample support from DEA and DHS, Artiga refused to provide the necessary resources to prosecute money laundering, trafficking in persons, and human smuggling cases. After consulting with Police Director Avila, who advocated strongly on Safie's behalf, Post agreed to neither support nor oppose Safie's election. Thus far, we have not been disappointed.

14. (C) With only two months on the job, Safie has already undertaken several important initiatives. First, unlike his predecessor, Safie is vigorously pursuing a DEA-generated money laundering case in which one of the principal suspects -- who is presently in custody -- is a prominent and wealthy local businessman. (Septel). In addition, the FGR recently achieved its first conviction for trafficking in persons (TIP) under the more stringent TIP law enacted in 2004. (Note: Prior convictions for TIP-related activities were actually charged as sexual exploitation, a lesser offense. End note.). Finally, Safie has pledged to investigate seven judges whose recent rulings suggest that their legal decisions were influenced by bribes or other self interests.

15. (C) Most importantly, Safie has recommitted the FGR to working closely with the PNC to achieve successful prosecutions. This working relationship did not exist under Safie's predecessor. (See 2006 INCSR and TIP reports). In furtherance of fostering greater cooperation, Safie has relocated FGR units dealing with narcotics, money laundering,

and organized crime from the FGR building to a separate location more easily accessible by the police. In addition, the narcotics and money laundering units now have a secure computer link with their police counterparts (provided by INL and Treasury). In short, Safie expects his units to cooperate with the PNC, and is taking measures to ensure said collaboration.

16. (C) Comment: Safie understands that the Embassy's silence during the selection process helped his candidacy. We will continue to press him on his efforts to reform the FGR.  
Butler